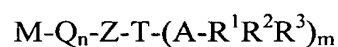


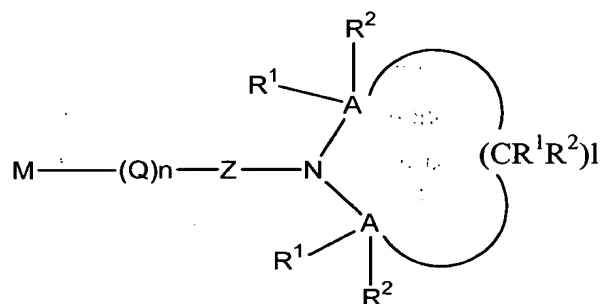
**In the Claims**

1-16. (Cancelled)

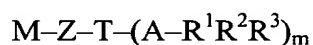
17. (Currently Amended) A hydrocarbon composition comprising one or more protected functionalized chain extended anionic polymerization initiators of the formula



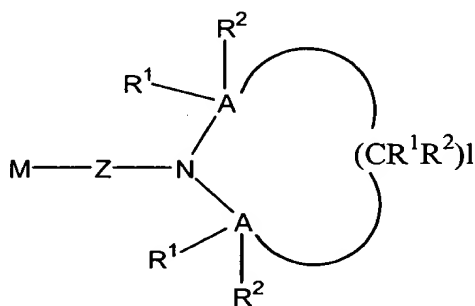
or of the formula



and at least one additional initiator comprises one or more non-chain extended compounds of the formula



or



wherein:

M is lithium;

Q is a saturated or unsaturated hydrocarbyl group derived by incorporation of at least one conjugated diene hydrocarbons or mixtures thereof;

Z is a straight chain hydrocarbon connecting group which contains 3-25 carbon atoms;

T is oxygen;

A is carbon;

$(A-R^1R^2R^3)_m$  is a protecting group ~~in which A is carbon~~ and  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$ , and  $R^3$  are alkyl;

n is  $>0$  and  $<1$ ; and

m is 1.

18-24. (Cancelled)

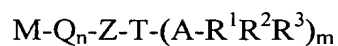
25. (Original) The composition of Claim 17, wherein said conjugated diene is selected from the group consisting of 1,3-butadiene, isoprene, 2,3-dimethyl-1,3-butadiene, 1,3-pentadiene (piperylene), myrcene, 2-methyl-3-ethyl-1,3-butadiene, 2-methyl-3-ethyl-1,3-pentadiene, 1,3-hexadiene, 2-methyl-1,3-hexadiene, 1,3-heptadiene, 3-methyl-1,3-heptadiene, 1,3-octadiene, 3-butyl-1,3-octadiene, 3,4-dimethyl-1,3-hexadiene, 3-n-propyl-1,3-pentadiene, 4,5-diethyl-1,3-octadiene, 2,4-diethyl-1,3-butadiene, 2,3-di-n-propyl-1,3-butadiene, 2-methyl-3-isopropyl-1,3-butadiene, and mixtures thereof.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Previously Presented) The composition of Claim 25, wherein Q comprises isoprene.

28-91. (Cancelled)

92. (Currently Amended) The composition of Claim 17, comprising a protected functionalized chain extended anionic polymerization initiator of the formula



wherein:

M is lithium;

Q is derived by incorporation of isoprene;

Z is  $-(CH_2)_3-$ ;

T is oxygen;

A is carbon;

$(A-R^1R^2R^3)_m$  is a protecting group; and

each  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$ , and  $R^3$  is  $-CH_3$ ; and

m is 1.